

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 339

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID PEPR NS NE
SUBJ: NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT MINISTER TO SURINAM FOR TALKS

REF: PARAMARIBO 141

1. NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION MINISTER DE KONING IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN PARAMARIBO MARCH 12 FOR A WEEK-LONG ROUND OF TALKS WITH GOS DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT MICHEL CAMBRIDGE, AND ORIENTATION VISITS TO ONGOING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND PROPOSED PROJECT SITES. VISIT IS FIRST BY DE KONING SINCE HE ASSUMED HIS PRESENT POSITION AND IS IMPORTANT IN CONTEXT OF ONGOING DUTCH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO SURINAM SINCE DE KONING AND CAMBRIDGE WILL ATTEMPT TO SORT OUT DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED AT THE TIME OF SURINAM'S INDEPENDENCE IN NOVEMBER 1975.

2. REFTEL REPORTED ON CONTINUING FRICTION WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THE SURINAM-NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION EFFORT SINCE IT BEGAN ON A TRULY MASSIVE
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SCALE IN 1975, AND WHICH ULTIMATELY LED TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE NETHERLANDS-SURINAM DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION COMMITTEE (THE JOINT COMMISSION WHICH APPROVES EXPENDITURES FROM THE DUTCH DEVELOPMENT FUNDS) IN JANUARY. SINCE THEN, THE LOCAL PRESS HAS GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO LAMBASTE THE DUTCH ON CHARGES RANGING FROM INTERFERENCE IN SURINAM'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS TO NEO-

COLONIALISM AND INCLUDING PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR AND SOME OF HIS EMBASSY STAFF. IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN A CONTINUING REPLY OF ARTICLES FROM PAPERS PUBLISHED IN THE NETHERLANDS WHICH HIGHLIGHT OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL DUTCH CRITICISM OF SURINAM'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND CAPABILITIES.

3. OFFICIALLY, THE GOS HAS BEEN MORE RESTRAINED ALTHOUGH IT HAS REACTED TO SOME OF THE MORE INCENDIARY COMMENTS OF THE NETHERLANDS PRESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVERNMENT HAS RESISTED EFFORTS BY THE OPPOSITION TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ALTHOUGH A CONFUSED CLOSED SESSION WAS CALLED UPON THE OPPOSITION'S REQUEST. MINISTER CAMBRIDGE IS QUOTED AS REJECTING A SUGGESTION MADE BY FORMER MINISTER PRESIDENT SEDNEY TO DISBAND THE CONS AND PUT THE SURINAM-NETHERLANDS COOPERATIVE EFFORT IN THE HANDS OF AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION SUCH AS THE WORLD BANK, ADDING THAT THE NETHERLANDS HAD ONCE SUGGESTED THIS BUT THAT THE GOS DID NOT VIEW THE BANK'S STANDARDS IN THE GRANTING OF ASSISTANCE AS APPLICABLE TO SURINAM.

4. AT LEAST ONE SURINAM CONS MEMBER, EWALD KARAMAT ALI, BELIEVES THAT THE TROUBLED WATERS IN SURINAM'S ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NETHERLANDS HAVE BEEN SMOOTHED BY THE RECENT VISIT OF A DUTCH PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION
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INCLUDING THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE DUTCH LOWER HOUSE C. KLEISTERLEE. THE DUTCH DELEGATION, WHICH WAS HERE TO TURN OVER TO SURINAM A CARILLON DONATED BY THE DUTCH PARLIAMENT, TOURED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN WEST SURINAM AND IN THE VIEW OF KARAMAT ALI RETURNED IMPRESSED WITH THE PROGRESS THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE. HOWEVER, KARAMAT ALI SEES THE DUTCH AS NOT YET READY TO HANDLE A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE MAGNITUDE ENVISIONED IN SURINAM, TERMING THEIR DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDES "IMMATURE", AND HE ANTICIPATES CONTINUED DIFFERENCES OF OPINION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH SURINAM SHOULD BE FOLLOWING. SURINAM, ACCORDING TO KARAMAT ALI, WANTS TO DEVELOP THE INFRA-STRUCTURE NEEDED FOR MEDIUM AND LARGER SCALE INDUSTRY TO DEVELOP, WHEREAS, HE SAYS, THE NETHERLANDS EXPERTS PREFER SMALL SCALE INDUSTRY SUITED TO SURINAM'S SMALL POPULATION AND HAVE IN THE PAST DEMONSTRATED A HIT AND MISS APPROACH TO NEW PROJECTS.

5. FROM THE OUTSIDERS VIEWPOINT, IT WOULD SEEM TO BE IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH SURINAM AND THE NETHERLANDS TO GET THEIR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP BACK ON COURSE, BUT HOW MALLEABLE THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS

WILL PROBE TO BE REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE HEART OF THE
DISAGREEMENT CENTERS ON THE DUTCH INTEREST IN RETAINING
A SAY IN THE USE OF THEIR FUNDS AND SURINAM'S SENSE OF
ITS INDEPENDENCE AND DESIRE TO MAKE ITS OWN DECISION,
AND THIS MEANS CONTINUING FRUSTRATIONS IN THE RELATION-
SHIP IN SPITE OF WHATEVER MODUS VIVENDI MINISTERS
DE KONING AND CAMBRIDGE ARE ABLE TO WORK OUT TO PUT THE
CONS BACK IN BUSINESS.
LORTON

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